

## WHAT IS A RECORD? | WHAT IS NOT A RECORD?

### *Record or Non-Record*

Determinations of record/non-record status begin with the statutory definition of records.

- Wis.Stats. 16.61 *Public records include all materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any state agency in connection with the transaction of public business.*
- Wis.Stats. 16.61 *Non-records include: Records and correspondence of any member of the legislature. Any state document received by a state document depository library. Duplicate copies of materials the original copies of which are in the custody of the same state agency and which are maintained only for convenience or reference and for no other substantive purpose. Materials in the possession of a library or museum made or acquired solely for reference or exhibition purposes. Notices or invitations received by a state agency that were not solicited by the agency and that are not related to any official action taken, proposed or considered by the agency. Drafts, notes, preliminary computations and like materials prepared for the originator's personal use or prepared by the originator in the name of a person for whom the originator is working. Routing slips and envelopes.*

*In essence, records are documents or information that support the transacting of state agency (UW-Madison) business — and therefore must be retained an appropriate length of time based upon retention policies.*

### ***Non-Records — DELETE AT WILL***

- ✓ Identify Non-Records:
  - Personal email
  - Junk email, spam
  - Listservs or other similar email lists
  - Announcements of a general nature: invitations to events, holiday parties, etc.
  - Routine business activities (incoming and outgoing): 'Is the meeting still on?'; 'Enclosed is the copy of ...'; Thank You's; etc..
- ✓ Limited value email messages. Messages are generally of routine administrative value, no longer than six months, and include such things as requests for information about programs and services, hours of service, brochures, etc. Delete after request is satisfied.

### ***Official Records — RETAIN AS REQUIRED***

- ✓ Focus on major functions in the department in which email is significant support tool:
  - Only mechanism to distribute official communications; minutes, agenda, reports.
  - Conveying official information to student or clients.
- ✓ Who is responsible for those functions?
- ✓ Determine documentation strategy:
  - Copy to central or designated email address.
  - Each staff maintains their own.
  - Establish a classification scheme: uniform folder titles, naming conventions for directories holding official records.

- ✓ Relationship to other electronic records:
  - Though the report, minutes, memo, etc., may have been created using technology such as word processing, the email message can still be critical as a record because it contains the distribution list, date and time sent, and other data not a part of the other copy.
  - Data for report exists in a database. If the email message is conveying data from a database or data warehouse, it may still be important to retain the email message especially if the message was intended to convey official information and may need to be reproduced at a later date.
- ✓ Select a storage medium:
  - Paper
  - Retain in email system
  - Transfer to another electronic format
    - ◆ REMEMBER. If the electronic file is the official record, then steps need to be taken to be sure that it meets the requirements of ADM Rule 12. See: [http://archives.library.wisc.edu/faq/faq\\_adm12.htm](http://archives.library.wisc.edu/faq/faq_adm12.htm)
- ✓ Plan for conversion and migration:
  - Move email messages outside the email system
  - Adopt standard file format: PDF, XML, etc.
- ✓ Apply approved retention policy. If a records retention policy does not exist, one should be prepared.

## **QUESTION**

### **Doesn't DoIT retain all email on back-up tapes?**

No. DoIT retains email residing on the WiscMail servers for 15 days. If you use an email client such as Groupwise or Thunderbird to access your email, the email then is pulled down from WiscMail and resides on your computer. Whatever entity that provides server space for your department (e.g., in the case of the Chancellor's office, the server is maintained by the Graduate School) will have back-up tapes that may contain your email messages for some period of time.

The important thing to remember is that information technology services do not provide archive services, at least not at the present time. Also, back-up tapes are not adequate for records retention. A retention policy should be applied consistently, however, to both the computer copy of the email and to any back-up tapes that may contain copies.

## **OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

### **University Archives and Records Management Services (ARMS)**

Electronic Records Forum-Materials prepared on the management of electronic records:  
<http://archives.library.wisc.edu>

### **Legal Services**

Guidelines for Responding to Public Records Requests: <http://www.wisc.edu/legal/PubRecordsReq.pdf>

## **EMAIL SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY**

### *How is email being used in my department?*

- Does it support official communications?
  - Official copy of committee minutes and agenda?
  - Official communications with students?
- Support official transactions?
  - Confirm purchases?
  - Transmit grades?
  - Communicate with clients?

### *Are employees aware of official policy and rules?*

- Do employees understand email risks?
- Have they been given training in the use of their email client?

### *Have I identified email messages containing records and segregated them?*

- How often do I check my email?
- If I need an email message back, can I identify and retrieve the one I am looking for?
- How many times do I go looking for an email but am unable to locate it?
- Do I know how retention rules apply to my email?
- Has my department established responsibilities with regard to email retention and disposition?
- Have I separated / deleted personal messages?

### *What does my department currently do to manage email messages that have record value?*

- Print the message and file with related materials?
- Retain on individual hard drives?

### *Who has access to staff email accounts?*

- Are there plans for checking email accounts with when staff is on vacation or ill?
- Is there any central or general email address for public inquiries?

## FILE CLASSIFICATION AND NAMING SCHEMES

### Basic Rules:

- Subject to the same retention and disposition as hard copy equivalent.
- Filing in an appropriately designated folder will narrow searches, focus legal proceedings (subpoena, discovery, etc.), facilitate the production of audit trail documentation, and facilitate open records requests.
- Email messages can be managed either within the email client or outside of it. In a shared drive environment, folders and sub-folders can be established and designated as the 'official files.' This permits other staff in the department to delete their message as they represent working copies.
- Ideally, other electronic files relating to the same topic should be filed in the same folder.
- Annually, folders should be closed and a new one started for the new year. This facilitates the application and implementation of retention and disposition requirements.
- Remove/delete non-records and personal messages daily.

### Classification – File Naming Best Practice

Records Series Title	Retention Period	Location/Email Client	Location/Dept. Server
<b>Correspondence-Business</b>			
- Corres-Routine			
- Corres-Short term			
- Corres-Audit/Litigation			
- Corres-Historical			
<b>Correspondence-Academic Administration</b>			
- Corres-Prof. associations			
- Corres-Research			
- Corres-Academic Admin (department chair, dean, director)			
<b>Correspondence-Private</b>			
<b>Committee</b>			
- Dept.			
- Dept. Executive			
- Curriculum			
- Other			